

**2020 Fee Adjustment Process Q & A  
FAIRFAX COUNTY PARK AUTHORITY**

**Q: Why does the Park Authority charge fees?**

A: As a part of its mission, the Park Authority offers a broad range of leisure facilities and services desired by those who live in Fairfax County. To support these facilities and services, the Park Authority charges fees that supplement the appropriation received from the County's General Fund.

The Authority's user fee policy authorizes that "services and facilities supported entirely, or in part, by the Park Authority Revenue and Operating Fund may have fees designated and charged, as authorized under the Park Authorities Act, offering a mechanism to increase the availability of programs and services that the General Fund does not provide."

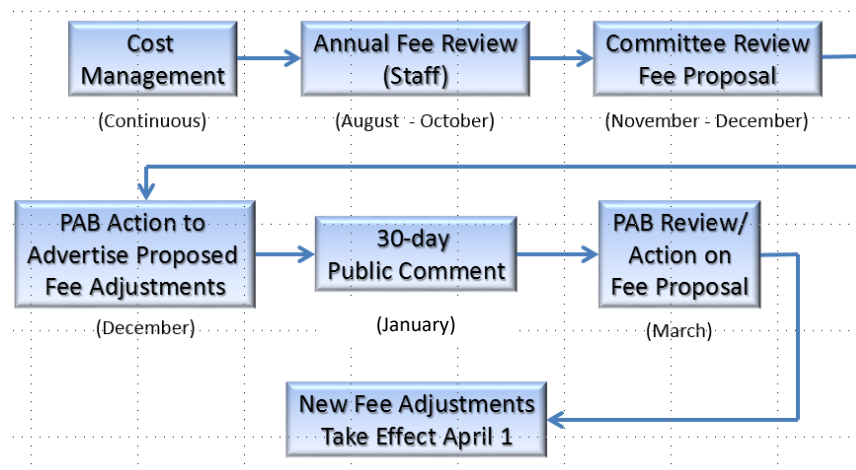
User fee revenues collected by the Park Authority are placed in the Park Authority Revenue and Operating Fund and are used for day-to-day operations of golf courses, RECenters, fee programs and store sales at Resource Management sites, rental facilities, program support at lakefront parks and Revenue and Operating Fund support operations. The Park Authority Revenue and Operating Fund is managed as a collective enterprise. Its net revenues are used to fund renovation and capital improvements at Revenue and Operating Fund sites.

**Q: Who can adjust the fees at Fairfax County Park Authority facilities?**

A: Staff recommends facility fee adjustments, as needed, after analysis of facility operating and maintenance costs, and long term capital repair and replacement needs. Costs and fees are reviewed by staff on a regular basis to minimize fee changes in any one year.

The Fairfax County Park Authority Board (PAB) makes the final decision through approval of the fee schedule, after studying staff recommendations and considering citizen comments. The Park Authority Director can authorize discounts from approved fees for promotional purposes.

Typically, the PAB considers fee adjustments annually following the process outlined below.



During times of budgetary stress, the PAB also reserves the right to make fee adjustments as needed during other times of the year.

**Q: How are fees determined?**

**A:** In general, the Park Authority follows a 4-step process in establishing fees.

1. *Determine the proportion of costs which the price should cover.* Some fees are:
  - a. nominal (don't cover a significant portion of direct operational costs, e.g., carousel rides),
  - b. meant to cover direct operational costs (e.g., RECenter room rentals),
  - c. targeted to cover direct costs plus overhead (e.g., full cost recovery such as RECenter admissions)
  - d. meant to cover direct costs, overhead and some additional marginal cost for future capital needs (e.g., greens fees).

The determination of what degree of cost recovery is appropriate is based on a notion of where a service rests on the continuum of services. Some services are felt to be of general benefit to all and are, therefore, subsidized to some degree. Others are felt to be of benefit only to those who participate. In such instances, full cost recovery is warranted.

Fee adjustments must also keep pace with increases in the cost-of-living and the cost of operations. The Washington-Baltimore consumer price index (CPI) was up 1.2% over the 12-month period from July 2018 – July 2019. Cumulative two-year and three-year growth in CPI were 3.2% and 4.3% respectively.

2. *Determine the going rate.* Others offering similar services are surveyed to ensure that Park Authority rates are generally within the range of comparable providers – public and private.

3. *Examine the appropriateness of fee differentials.* Fee differentials are used in a variety of instances including differences based on residency, age, time, quantities purchased and promotional needs.
4. *Consider how patrons will perceive recommended fee changes.* Will patrons feel the recommended fee or fee increase is fair? Is the increase reasonable given costs and market conditions? Will the fee reduce patron participation? Are there alternatives to reduce adverse impacts? Will the service still be perceived as a good value?

**Q: Does the Park Authority Board (PAB) pay attention to citizens' comments, or are these changes going to happen no matter what comments are received?**

A: The PAB does pay attention to your comments. A 30-day public comment period on the fee proposal runs from January 2, 2020 through January 31, 2020, and a public comment meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, January 15, 2020 at 7:00 p.m. in room 106 of the Herrity Building located at 12055 Government Center Parkway in Fairfax, VA. No decision on the proposed fee adjustments will be made until after the PAB has had an opportunity to review public comment. Action on fees is tentatively scheduled for the March 11<sup>th</sup> PAB meeting, with implementation of fee changes scheduled for April 1, 2020. Written comments are also accepted via letter or e-mail. For details about how to comment in writing see the question "I can't come to the Public Meeting, how can I let the PAB know my views?" below.

Those wishing to register to speak at the public comment meeting should call Judy Pedersen at 703-324-8662.

For a location map of the Herrity Building see:

<https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/location/herrity-building>

**Q: Which fees are included in this list of proposed fee adjustments?**

A: Fee adjustments for 2020 are proposed in the following areas:

- Golf greens fees – Greendale (off-season 9 & 18 holes); Jefferson (off-season and in-season 9 holes); Laurel Hill (weekend in-season 18 holes, 9 holes after 4 pm);
- RECenters – Leisure Fitness Pass – recurring billing option – *New*; Weekend/holiday general admission (Cub Run) – *New*; indoor swimming pool base rates; ice rink rental (Mt. Vernon);
- Water Mine, Lake Fairfax – daily admission, shade structure rental, season passes, group rate;

- Train, Burke Lake – after-hour/season rental – *New*;
- Group camping – Burke Lake and Lake Fairfax parks;
- Picnic reservation (select locations);
- Volleyball court rental – Burke Lake, Lake Accotink, Lee District, Nottoway and Stratton Woods parks;
- Amphitheater rental – Lee District and Mason District Parks;
- Business Activity License minimum fee;
- Athletic field rental, grass fields, per hour;
- Frying Pan Farm Park Visitor Center Auditorium – weekend rental;
- Group campfire rental – Burke Lake, Ellanor C. Lawrence, Lake Accotink and Lake Fairfax parks – *New*.

**Q: Why are fees adjusted?**

A: The Park Authority has an obligation to provide public recreation services to the citizens of Fairfax County, so it must ensure the financial stability of its operations. One way to insure this is to require that costs and revenues from operations remain in balance. For example:

- Annual golf course and RECenter operation and maintenance are funded entirely by user fees, not taxes. Fees must be adjusted to insure that operating costs as well as repair and replacement needs can be met.
- Fiscal realities over the past several years have made it impossible to maintain Resource Management facilities solely out of the General Fund (citizens' taxes).
- Extra revenue has funded, and will continue to fund, new programs and services for park patrons.
- In response to Federal health care legislation, the Park Authority Revenue and Operating Fund is now responsible for absorbing health care costs for eligible seasonal employees.
- Facilities are aging and renovation/repair needs are increasing. User fee funds have recently been used for facility renovation projects at RECenters, golf courses and other facilities.

Fee adjustments are proposed to bring fees in line with the cost of providing services, to prevent the Park Authority from undercutting any competitors in the private sector, to provide adequate revenue to maintain the financial health of the Park Authority Revenue and Operating Fund (the repository of user fees) and to provide patrons with affordable recreation services.

**Q: When will the fee changes take place?**

A: Any fee adjustments approved by the Park Authority Board on March 11, 2020 will take effect on April 1, 2020.

**Q: Do fees increase every year?**

A: No. Although the fee schedule is reviewed every year, all fees do not necessarily increase annually. Some of the fees that are proposed for adjustment haven't been changed in several years. However, in order to minimize the impact of fee increases on users, the Park Authority Board's adopted Financial Management Annual Update does advocate employing smaller, more frequent fee adjustments rather than delaying increases for a longer period and then applying larger percentage increases to catch-up to rising costs.

**Q: Instead of raising fees, why don't you just cut costs?**

A: The Park Authority always looks to minimize cost increases and make programmatic changes before considering fee changes. All divisions continuously monitor their use of seasonal personnel and overtime, for example, as cost cutting initiatives. Fee increases are only considered after cost control measures have been taken in order to maintain the level of quality in service delivery that users expect.

**Q: What added benefits will I receive from these adjusted fees?**

A: The proposed fee adjustments will help to ensure the stability of the Park Authority's Revenue Fund which finances facilities and programs like golf courses, RECenters, lakefront parks and some services at cultural and historic sites. Revenues obtained from users fees also service the debt on revenue bonds that have been used to fund golf facility and service expansion, including the development of Oak Marr and expansion of Twin Lakes in the 1990s and the development of Laurel Hill in the 2000s. In recent years, the revenue that is generated from user fees has also helped to fund other new service enhancements such as updates to RECenter fitness equipment, bent grass turf conversion at Twin Lakes Golf Course and new aquatic entertainment features at Lake Fairfax's Water Mine.

**Q: I can't come to the Public Meeting, how can I let the PAB know my views?**

A: The PAB welcomes written comments (sent via e-mail or letter) received by January 31, 2020.

E-mail comments should be sent to: [parkmail@fairfaxcounty.gov](mailto:parkmail@fairfaxcounty.gov)

Letters should be addressed to:

ATTN: Public Information Office/Fee Comments

Fairfax County Park Authority  
12055 Government Center Parkway, Suite #927  
Fairfax, Virginia 22035

**Q: How can I get more information?**

A: Fee information is posted on the Park Authority's web site at:

<https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/feemeeting>

Information is also available for review during the 30-day comment period (January 2-31, 2020) at staffed Park Authority locations, including Park Authority main offices in the Herrity Building, RECenters, golf courses, nature centers and historic sites. Citizen and press inquiries should be made to the Public Information Officer, Judy Pedersen, who can be reached at 703-324-8662.